

Our world is in trouble, a very serious trouble, as if the violence, destruction and death in the Middle East is not enough, the world has been plunged very recently into a very serious crisis as result of the confrontation between the Russia and the Western powers over the Ukraine. This is the main topic for this update, but before I start talking about it I am going to go back to the Middle East situation, which has been the topic for my last update, which since then, and this is why I am going back to it has gotten much worse. In all of the countries which were supposed be going into a spring which have turned as I have made it very clear in my last update had in fact turned into a real hell, which again as a result of the restraints on the size of a Hanoudi Letter update, I am going to say few words about the situation in Egypt, Syria and Iraq and will concentrate on the recent east-west crisis, which is reminiscent of those world was frequently plunged into during the cold war and the threat it poses to the world's peace and stability.

The situation in Egypt is getting out of hand, in spite of all the efforts by the civilian authority which came to power with the backing of the military that followed the recent coup there. The security situation is getting out of hands with daily incidents of attempted assassinations, suicidal attacks and other very serious acts of violence, to which the new authority is reacting by imposing increasingly harsh responses, returning to old dictatorship's military and police tactics, which are going to be crowned by elevating general Al-sissi who led the recent coup to the top as the new president, which is going to be achieved in few months' time thus completing the circle and bringing the country back to the old days of the military dictatorships under which Egypt has been suffering for more than a half century.

The situation in Syria is impossible to describe, the pandemonium is not abating, with no end in sight, in fact the civil war is gone into its fourth year, and there has recently been a greatly publicized attempt by the United Nations to end the war. The August international body was able to bring the two sides the conflict face to face for few days, but it was hopeless the warring factions were unable to agree on anything and the murder resumed at an even greater pace, with some people are suggesting that this war is going to go on for ten more years, with a very high chance that it might drag others into it creating a much greater conflagration.

The third member of this tragic collection is Iraq, this unfortunate country is now in a very dangerous situation, a civil war which followed the Prime Minister's order to his forces to dismantle the Sunni's sit down in the Anbar province, during December of last year, creating a huge explosion in all the Sunni areas, mainly in Anbar province, an immense desert which was impossible to control even by the Americans. On the first day of the new year when I am trying to finish this piece the fighting is still raging, the cities of Ramadi and Fallujah have fallen under the control of violent jihadist groups over the past three months, and away from the central

government in Baghdad. Fighting around the towns of Fallujah and Ramadi displaced more than 140,000 the number of those who have fled the fighting, which erupted in the area. The country is going to have a general election on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April, it is impossible to imagine what might happen from now until election day, and even more difficult to predict the election results and what will happen after its conclusion. Now the Ukraine crisis.

The new crisis is involving Russia and the west over the Ukraine, and centered on the peninsula of Crimea, it unfolded in February 2014 in the aftermath of the Ukrainian rebellions which saw days of very serious and violent clashes between protesters and government forces in the capital. A protest against his decision to abandon a far-reaching European Union partnership deal in November 2013 a protest which morphed into a huge - and violent - campaign to push him from power.

But it was the deaths of at least 88 people, many of them protesters shot dead by uniformed snipers in 48 hours of bloodshed, that ultimately brought him down. The killings sent shock waves around the world. Under EU pressure he signed a deal to transfer powers to parliament and hold early elections. But within hours he had fled the capital and his administration had crumbled. He fled the country on February 22, to settle down in Russia where he was granted protection, but he always insisted that he was the legitimate head of state and he will return, but the people who succeeded him had other ideas, he was later on impeached by the Ukrainian parliament, a move which was rejected by the Russians who called it illegal and refused to accept it, but was accepted by the broader international community including the western European countries and the United States. This was followed by the appointment of a new Prime Minister and Council of Ministers as well as the appointment of a new Acting President, both measures were acknowledged by the broad majority of the international community, but were rejected by the Russians who are refusing to accept them.

A few days afterwards, unmarked men claimed by Russia to be local self-defense forces but widely believed to be Russian forces without insignia gradually took control of the Crimean peninsula. The Crimean parliament adopted a bill showing their intention to unilaterally declare themselves independent as a single United Nation with the possibility of joining the Russian Federation as a federal subject, should voters approve to do so in a referendum which is to be held on Sunday March 16, the voting is to decide whether to secede from Ukraine and join Russia or to choose effective independence. Ukraine's interim government in Kiev as well as U.S. and European leaders warned that the vote is illegitimate and will not be recognized by the west. Russia, on the other hand, vowed that its troops would stay until the political situation has been normalized while recognizing the recently appointed government of Crimea and mayor of Sevastopol, as well as the scheduled referendum and its possible outcome.

President Barack Obama said Europe and the United States "stand united" on Ukrainian sovereignty and subsequent consequences if that sovereignty is violated. Both Europe and the United States have warned Russia of potential sanctions if it continues its actions in Ukraine. "Hopefully, we all hope that we don't get pushed into a place where we have to do all those things. But we'll see what happens," Kerry said. The Europeans are threatening the Russian federation with all kinds of reprisals and sanctions, but the Russians are ignoring these threats and refusing to back down. The situation is very tense and worrying, it is reminiscent of the confrontations between the Soviet Union and the west during the peak days of the cold war.

At an eleven hour meeting and in a last attempt to salvage the situation and attempting to defuse the crisis, there was a meeting in London on February 14 between the American Secretary of State, John Kerry and his Russian counterpart in London which lasted for about six hours, but it was a failure like all the mediation attempt at reconciliation, the two sides failed to find a common ground on the crisis. The Russians said Moscow will respect the results of Sunday's referendum in the Crimea, the American envoy said his country and its allies are not going to recognize it, and The whole world is waiting for what is going to happen during the next few days, the result of the referendum is a foregone conclusion, the people in the Crimea are going to vote for some kind of union with Russia, but it is very difficult to predict the Russian president's next move, because if he is not going to de-escalate, then the world is going to be in a very serious trouble.

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